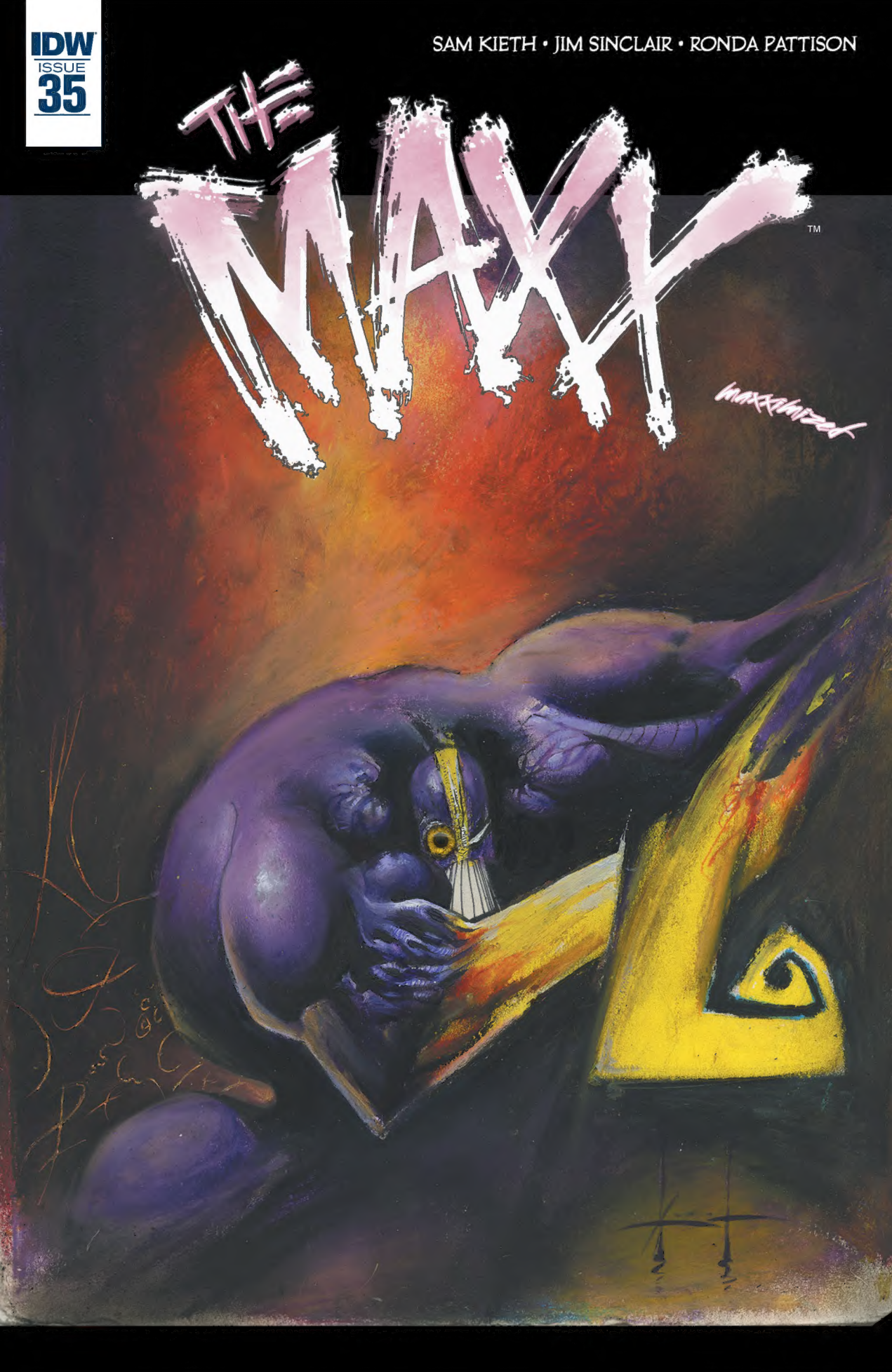
IDW
ISSUE
35
SAM KIETH • JIM SINCLAIR • RONDA PATTISON
THE MAXX
MAXXIMIZED

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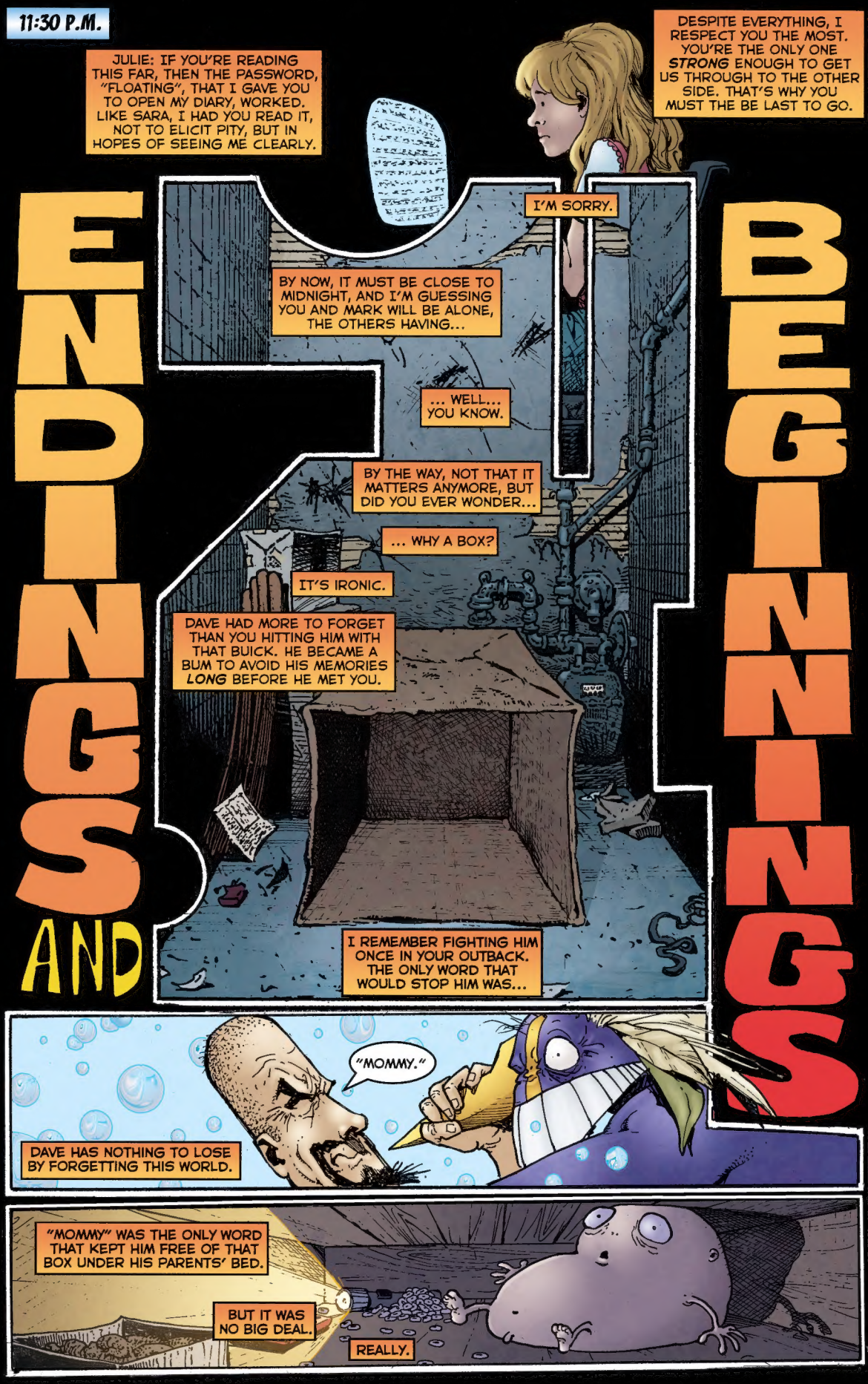
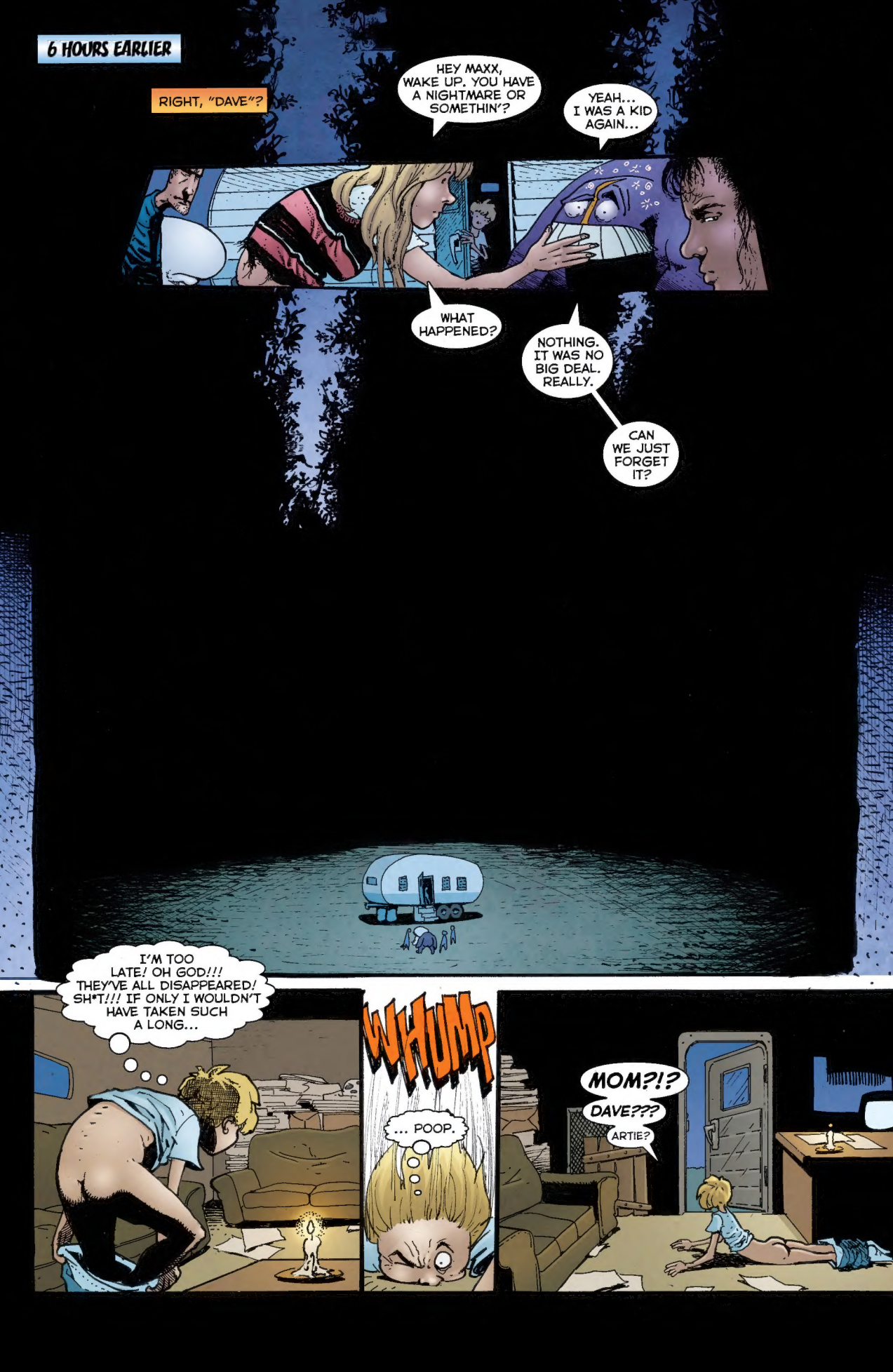
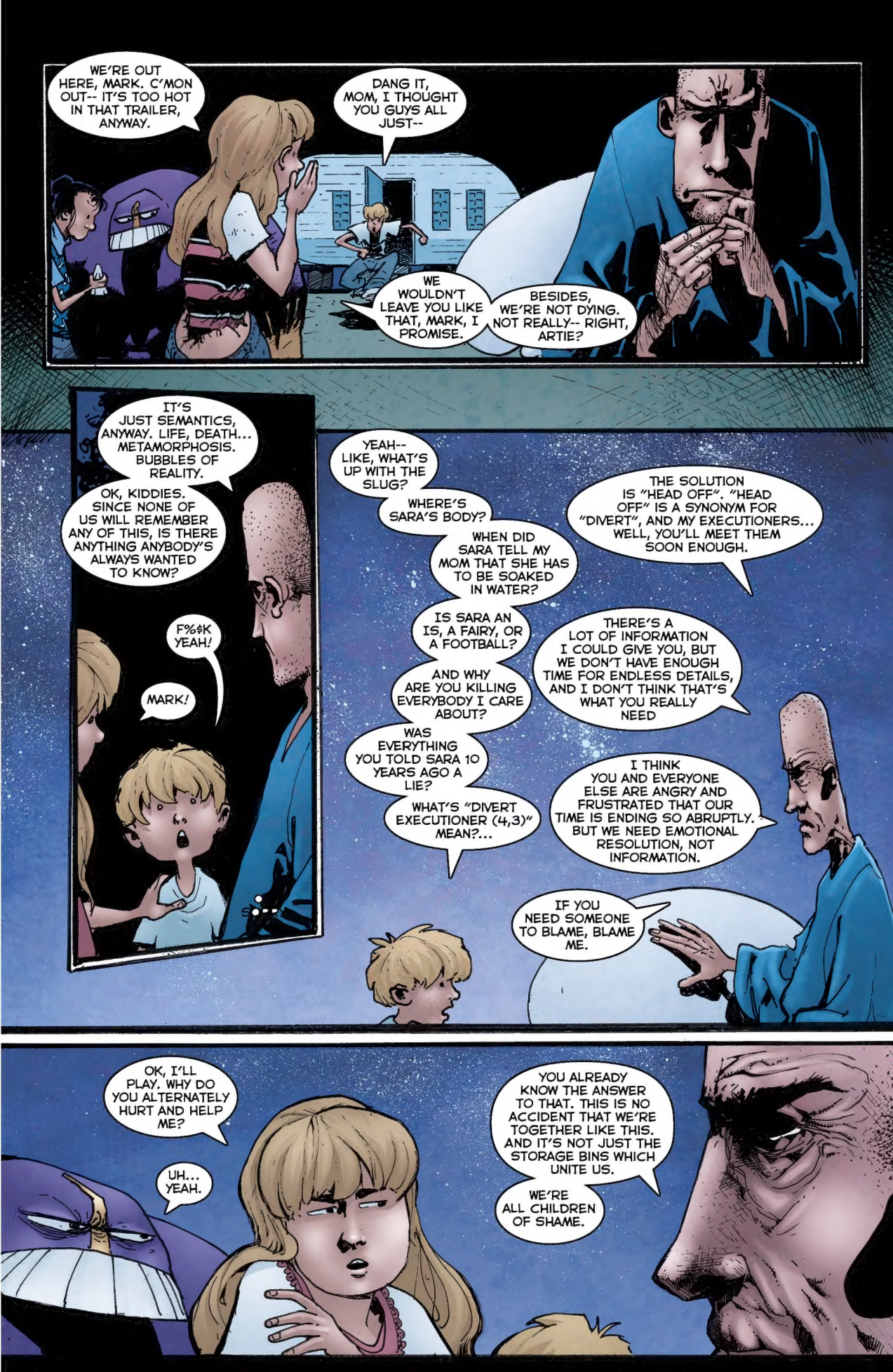
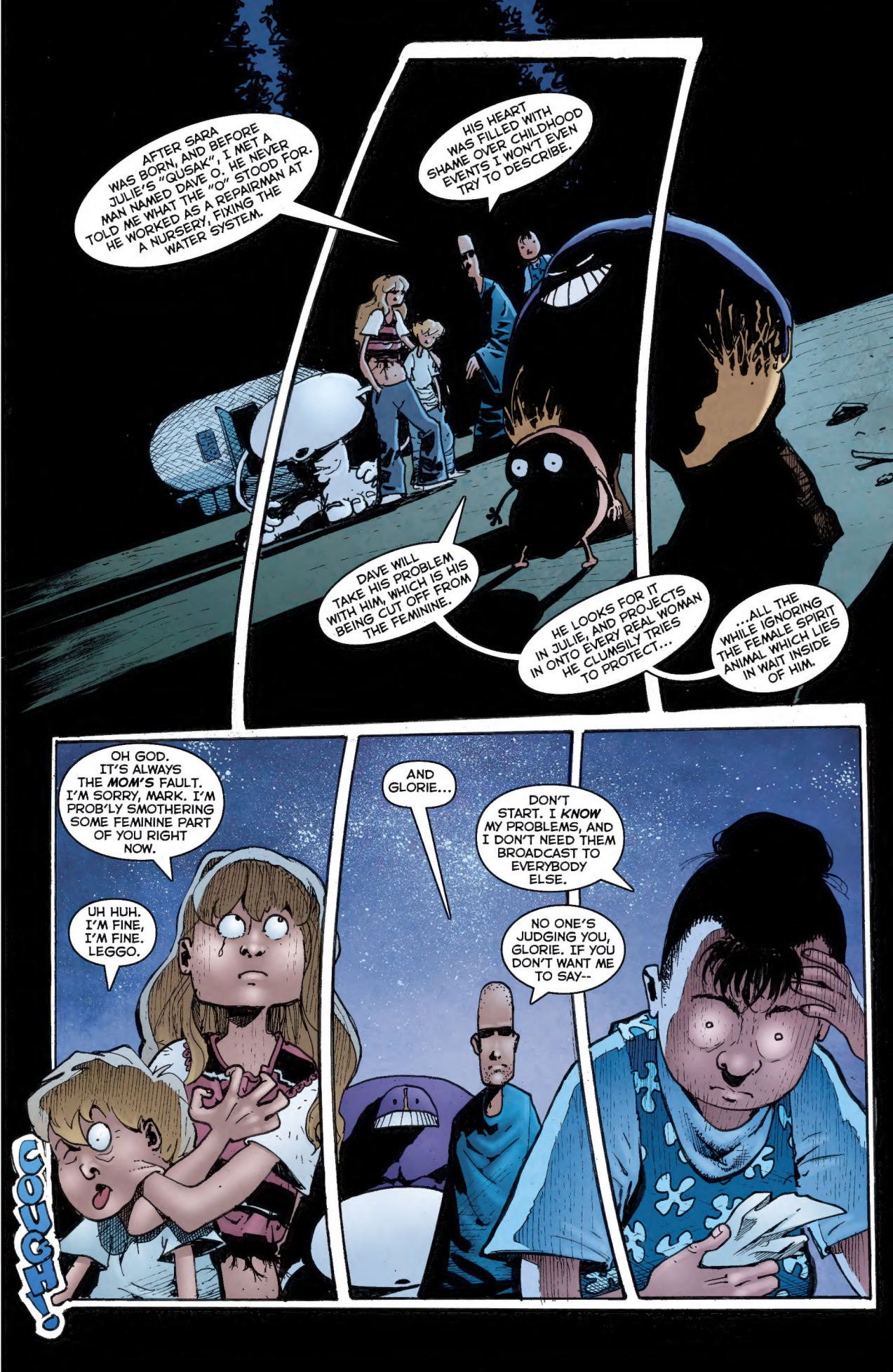
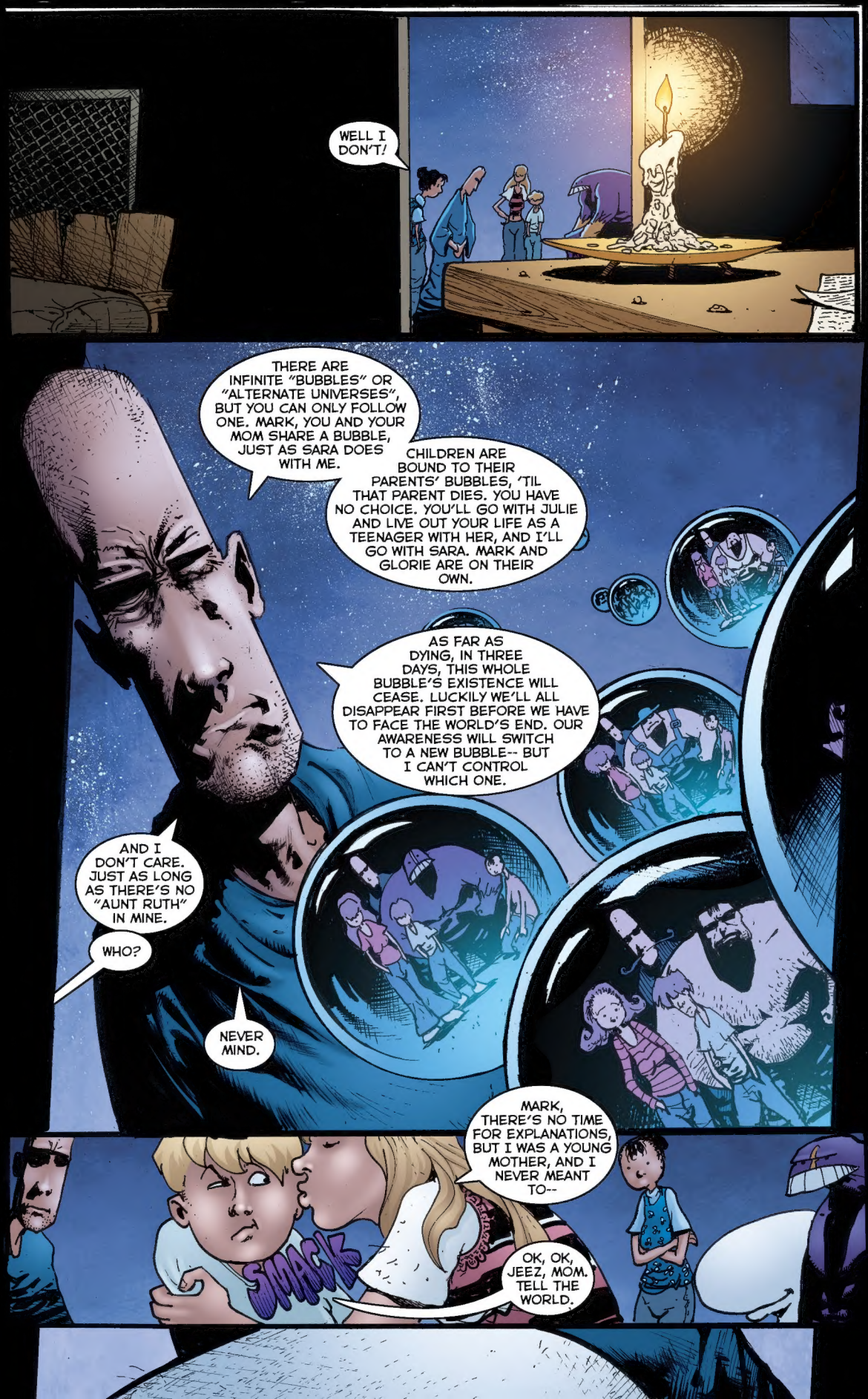

11:30 P.M.
JULIE: IF YOU'RE READING THIS FAR, THEN THE PASSWORD, "FLOATING", THAT I GAVE YOU TO OPEN MY DIARY, WORKED. LIKE SARA, I HAD YOU READ IT, NOT TO ELICIT PITY, BUT IN HOPES OF SEEING ME CLEARLY.
DESPITE EVERYTHING, I RESPECT YOU THE MOST. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE *STRONG* ENOUGH TO GET US THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE. THAT'S WHY YOU MUST THE BE LAST TO GO.
I'M SORRY.
ENDINGS AND
BEGINNINGS
BY NOW, IT MUST BE CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT, AND I'M GUESSING YOU AND MARK WILL BE ALONE, THE OTHERS HAVING...
... WELL... YOU KNOW.
BY THE WAY, NOT THAT IT MATTERS ANYMORE, BUT DID YOU EVER WONDER...
... WHY A BOX?
IT'S IRONIC.
DAVE HAD MORE TO FORGET THAN YOU HITTING HIM WITH THAT BUICK. HE BECAME A BUM TO AVOID HIS MEMORIES *LONG* BEFORE HE MET YOU.
I REMEMBER FIGHTING HIM ONCE IN YOUR OUTBACK. THE ONLY WORD THAT WOULD STOP HIM WAS...
"MOMMY."
DAVE HAS NOTHING TO LOSE BY FORGETTING THIS WORLD.
"MOMMY" WAS THE ONLY WORD THAT KEPT HIM FREE OF THAT BOX UNDER HIS PARENTS' BED.
BUT IT WAS NO BIG DEAL.
REALLY.

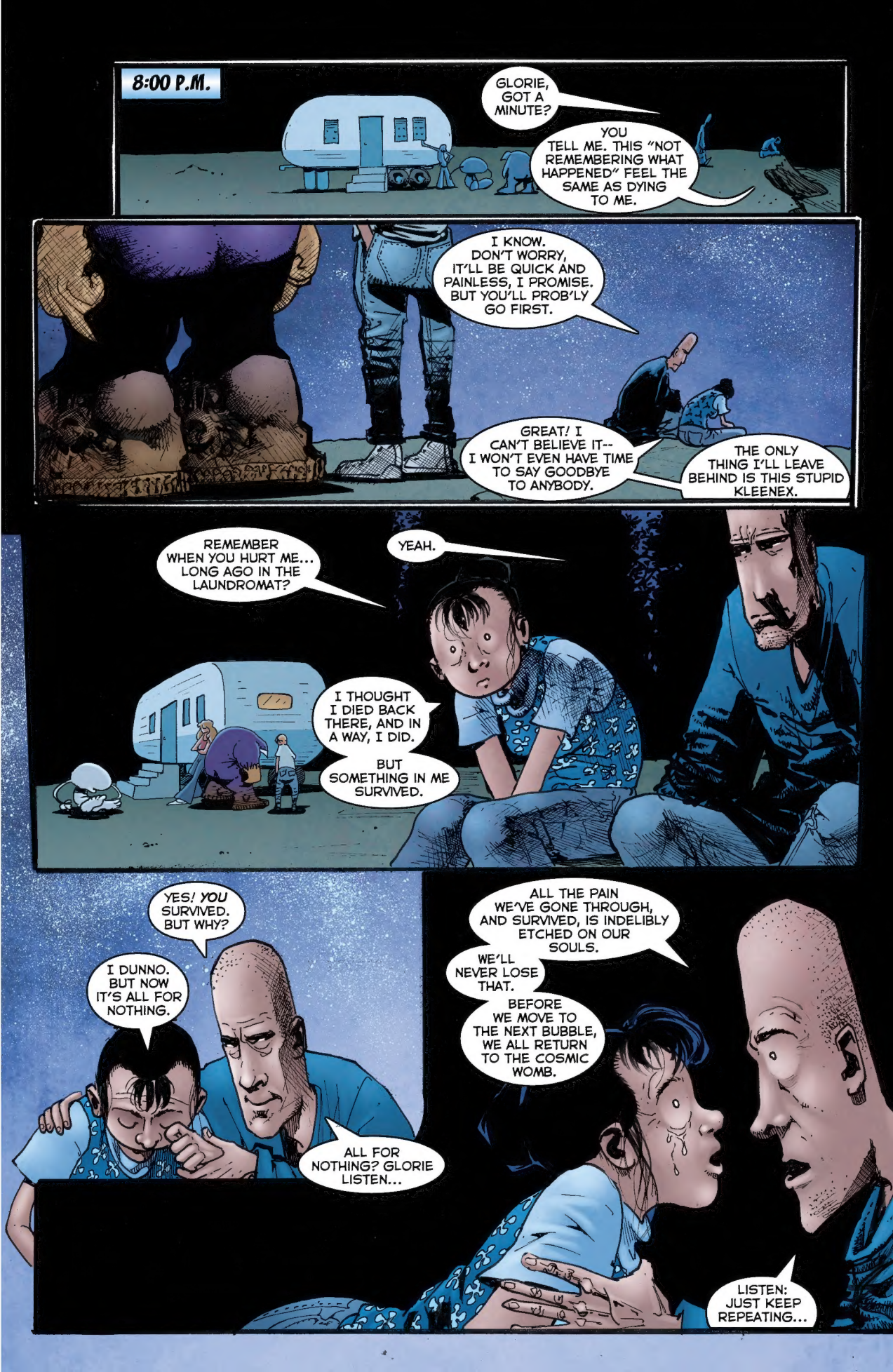

6 HOURS EARLIER
RIGHT, "DAVE"?
HEY MAXX, WAKE UP. YOU HAVE A NIGHTMARE OR SOMETHIN'?
YEAH... I WAS A KID AGAIN...
WHAT HAPPENED?
NOTHING. IT WAS NO BIG DEAL. REALLY.
CAN WE JUST FORGET IT?
I'M TOO LATE! OH GOD!!! THEY'VE ALL DISAPPEARED! SH*T!!! IF ONLY I WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN SUCH A LONG...
WHUMP
... POOP.
MOM?!?
DAVE???
ARTIE?

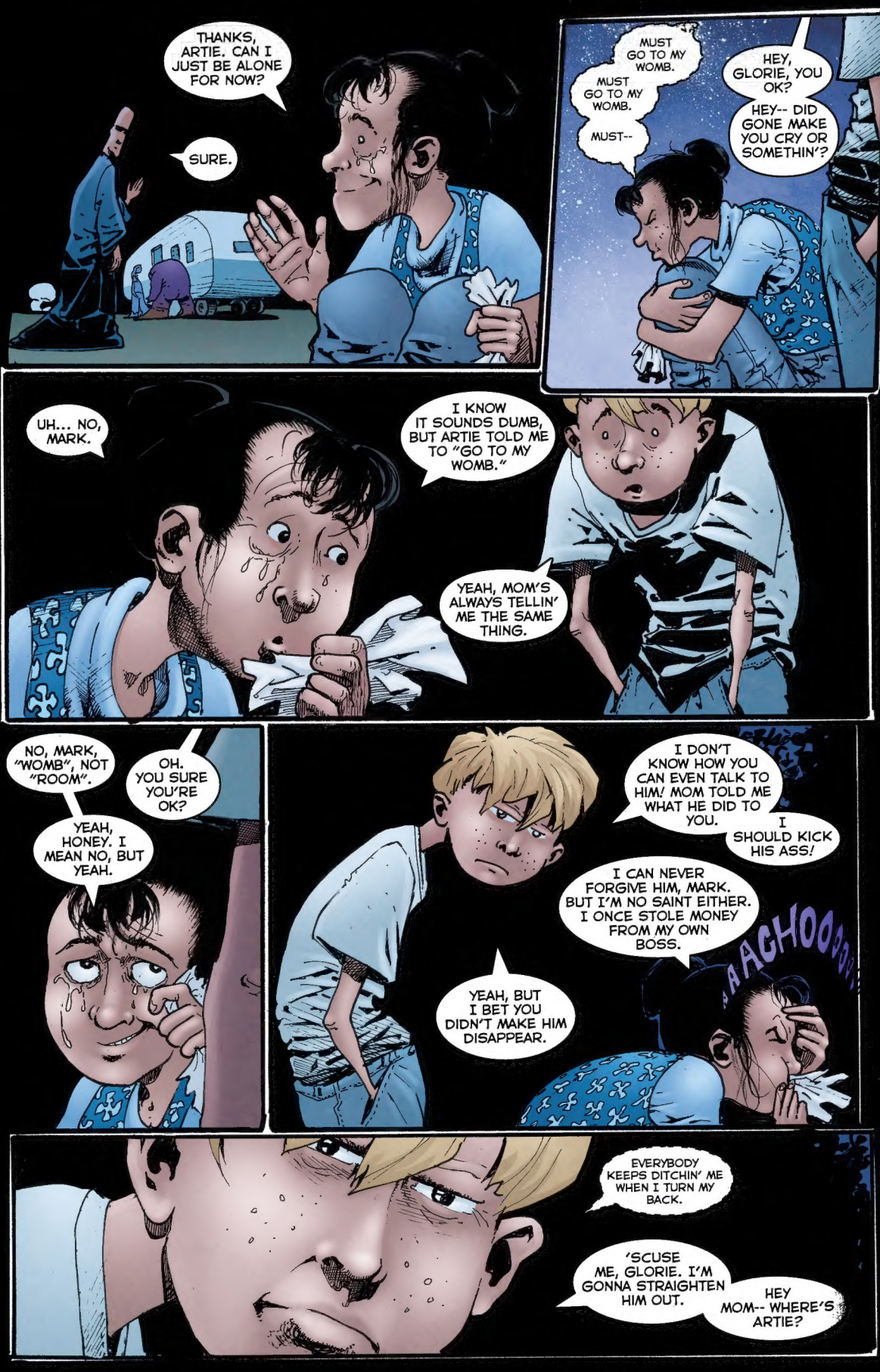

WE'RE OUT HERE, MARK. C'MON OUT-- IT'S TOO HOT IN THAT TRAILER, ANYWAY.
DANG IT, MOM, I THOUGHT YOU GUYS ALL JUST--
WE WOULDN'T LEAVE YOU LIKE THAT, MARK, I PROMISE.
BESIDES, WE'RE NOT DYING. NOT REALLY-- RIGHT, ARTIE?
IT'S JUST SEMANTICS, ANYWAY. LIFE, DEATH... METAMORPHOSIS. BUBBLES OF REALITY.
OK, KIDDIES. SINCE NONE OF US WILL REMEMBER ANY OF THIS, IS THERE ANYTHING ANYBODY'S ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW?
F%$K YEAH!
MARK!
YEAH-- LIKE, WHAT'S UP WITH THE SLUG?
WHERE'S SARA'S BODY?
WHEN DID SARA TELL MY MOM THAT SHE HAS TO BE SOAKED IN WATER?
IS SARA AN IS, A FAIRY, OR A FOOTBALL?
AND WHY ARE YOU KILLING EVERYBODY I CARE ABOUT?
WAS EVERYTHING YOU TOLD SARA 10 YEARS AGO A LIE?
WHAT'S "DIVERT EXECUTIONER (4,3)" MEAN?...
THE SOLUTION IS "HEAD OFF". "HEAD OFF" IS A SYNONYM FOR "DIVERT", AND MY EXECUTIONERS... WELL, YOU'LL MEET THEM SOON ENOUGH.
THERE'S A LOT OF INFORMATION I COULD GIVE YOU, BUT WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR ENDLESS DETAILS, AND I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT YOU REALLY NEED
I THINK YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE ARE ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED THAT OUR TIME IS ENDING SO ABRUPTLY. BUT WE NEED EMOTIONAL RESOLUTION, NOT INFORMATION.
IF YOU NEED SOMEONE TO BLAME, BLAME ME.
OK, I'LL PLAY. WHY DO YOU ALTERNATELY HURT AND HELP ME?
UH... YEAH.
YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT. THIS IS NO ACCIDENT THAT WE'RE TOGETHER LIKE THIS. AND IT'S NOT JUST THE STORAGE BINS WHICH UNITE US.
WE'RE ALL CHILDREN OF SHAME.

BEFORE I WENT TO STUDY WITH THE ABORIGINES, I BEFRIENDED JULIE'S PARENTS. WHEN JULIE WAS BORN, SHE SOON CREATED AN OUTBACK BASED ON MY STORIES OF AUSTRALIA. INEVITABLY, SHE LOST HER INNOCENCE ONE NIGHT TO A RABBIT, AND BLAMED HER MOM.
I FELT A KINSHIP WITH HER, AND PUT HER CHILDHOOD TOYS IN THE STORAGE BINS, HOPING TO HEAL HER.
HER SHAME, WHICH KEPT GROWING, FESTERED INTO BITTERNESS WHICH SHE TURNED OUTWARD ONTO THE WORLD.
WHEN SARA WAS BORN, WE TOLD HER I KILLED MYSELF, TO PROTECT HER. BUT SARA FORMED A QUILT OUTBACK BECAUSE THE PAIN OF LOSING HER FATHER WAS APPARENTLY WORSE THAN WHAT WE TRIED TO SPARE HER FROM.
... A SLUG OF SELF-DESTRUCTION. THAT'S WHY SARA'S NAME WAS ON HER OWN LIST.
THUS WAS BORN SARA'S SHAME, WHICH TURNED INWARD ON HERSELF, CREATING A SLUG...
WHEN A LONE IS ESCAPED JULIE'S OUTBACK, IT WAS ORPHANED INTO OUR WORLD. OVER 10 YEARS, IT GREW TO THIS SIZE. WHEN SARA LOST HER BODY.
I KNEW IT WAS MY FAULT. BUT IT WAS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY, AS I SAW THE END OF THIS BUBBLE DRAWING TO A CLOSE. PERHAPS TOGETHER, WE COULD FIND THE TIME WE'D BOTH LOST IN HER CHILDHOOD.
THOUGH THE DETAILS OF OUR LIVES WILL CHANGE, OUR CORE WILL REMAIN.
THUS OUR PERSONAL DILEMMAS WILL FOLLOW US, NO MATTER WHAT BUBBLE OR DIMENSION WE INHABIT. IN OUR NEXT BUBBLE, I MAY BE A PRIEST, JULIE A NURSE, OR MARK A GRANDPA. BUT WE SIX WILL ALWAYS PLAY A ROLE IN EACH OTHER'S LIVES UNTIL OUR SOUL JOURNEYS ARE COMPLETE.
SOUNDS PRETTY HOKEY TO ME. SO WHAT'RE OUR "DILLEMAS"?


AFTER SARA WAS BORN, AND BEFORE JULIE'S "QUSAK", I MET A MAN NAMED DAVE O. HE NEVER TOLD ME WHAT THE "O" STOOD FOR. HE WORKED AS A REPAIRMAN AT A NURSERY, FIXING THE WATER SYSTEM.
HIS HEART WAS FILLED WITH SHAME OVER CHILDHOOD EVENTS I WON'T EVEN TRY TO DESCRIBE.
DAVE WILL TAKE HIS PROBLEM WITH HIM, WHICH IS HIS BEING CUT OFF FROM THE FEMININE.
HE LOOKS FOR IT IN JULIE, AND PROJECTS IN ONTO EVERY REAL WOMAN HE CLUMSILY TRIES TO PROTECT...
...ALL THE WHILE IGNORING THE FEMALE SPIRIT ANIMAL WHICH LIES IN WAIT INSIDE OF HIM.
OH GOD. IT'S ALWAYS THE *MOM'S* FAULT. I'M SORRY, MARK. I'M PROB'LY SMOTHERING SOME FEMININE PART OF YOU RIGHT NOW.
UH HUH. I'M FINE, I'M FINE. LEGGO.
COUGH!
AND GLORIE...
DON'T START. I *KNOW* MY PROBLEMS, AND I DON'T NEED THEM BROADCAST TO EVERYBODY ELSE.
NO ONE'S JUDGING YOU, GLORIE. IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO SAY--


WELL I DON'T!
THERE ARE INFINITE "BUBBLES" OR "ALTERNATE UNIVERSES", BUT YOU CAN ONLY FOLLOW ONE. MARK, YOU AND YOUR MOM SHARE A BUBBLE, JUST AS SARA DOES WITH ME.
CHILDREN ARE BOUND TO THEIR PARENTS' BUBBLES, 'TIL THAT PARENT DIES. YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. YOU'LL GO WITH JULIE AND LIVE OUT YOUR LIFE AS A TEENAGER WITH HER, AND I'LL GO WITH SARA. MARK AND GLORIE ARE ON THEIR OWN.
AS FAR AS DYING, IN THREE DAYS, THIS WHOLE BUBBLE'S EXISTENCE WILL CEASE. LUCKILY WE'LL ALL DISAPPEAR FIRST BEFORE WE HAVE TO FACE THE WORLD'S END. OUR AWARENESS WILL SWITCH TO A NEW BUBBLE-- BUT I CAN'T CONTROL WHICH ONE.
AND I DON'T CARE. JUST AS LONG AS THERE'S NO "AUNT RUTH" IN MINE.
WHO?
NEVER MIND.
MARK, THERE'S NO TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS, BUT I WAS A YOUNG MOTHER, AND I NEVER MEANT TO--
SMACK
OK, OK, JEEZ, MOM. TELL THE WORLD.


8:00 P.M.
GLORIE, GOT A MINUTE?
YOU TELL ME. THIS "NOT REMEMBERING WHAT HAPPENED" FEEL THE SAME AS DYING TO ME.
I KNOW. DON'T WORRY, IT'LL BE QUICK AND PAINLESS, I PROMISE. BUT YOU'LL PROB'LY GO FIRST.
GREAT! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT-- I WON'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO ANYBODY.
THE ONLY THING I'LL LEAVE BEHIND IS THIS STUPID KLEENEX.
REMEMBER WHEN YOU HURT ME... LONG AGO IN THE LAUNDROMAT?
YEAH.
I THOUGHT I DIED BACK THERE, AND IN A WAY, I DID.
BUT SOMETHING IN ME SURVIVED.
YES! YOU SURVIVED. BUT WHY?
I DUNNO. BUT NOW IT'S ALL FOR NOTHING.
ALL FOR NOTHING? GLORIE LISTEN...
ALL THE PAIN WE'VE GONE THROUGH, AND SURVIVED, IS INDELIBLY ETCHED ON OUR SOULS.
WE'LL NEVER LOSE THAT.
BEFORE WE MOVE TO THE NEXT BUBBLE, WE ALL RETURN TO THE COSMIC WOMB.
LISTEN: JUST KEEP REPEATING...


THANKS, ARTIE. CAN I JUST BE ALONE FOR NOW?
SURE.
MUST GO TO MY WOMB.
MUST GO TO MY WOMB.
MUST--
HEY, GLORIE, YOU OK?
HEY-- DID GONE MAKE YOU CRY OR SOMETHIN'?
UH... NO, MARK.
I KNOW IT SOUNDS DUMB, BUT ARTIE TOLD ME TO "GO TO MY WOMB."
YEAH, MOM'S ALWAYS TELLIN' ME THE SAME THING.
NO, MARK, "WOMB", NOT "ROOM".
YEAH, HONEY. I MEAN NO, BUT YEAH.
OH. YOU SURE YOU'RE OK?
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN EVEN TALK TO HIM! MOM TOLD ME WHAT HE DID TO YOU.
I SHOULD KICK HIS ASS!
I CAN NEVER FORGIVE HIM, MARK. BUT I'M NO SAINT EITHER. I ONCE STOLE MONEY FROM MY OWN BOSS.
AAGHOOOO!
YEAH, BUT I BET YOU DIDN'T MAKE HIM DISAPPEAR.
EVERYBODY KEEPS DITCHIN' ME WHEN I TURN MY BACK.
'SCUSE ME, GLORIE. I'M GONNA STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT.
HEY MOM-- WHERE'S ARTIE?

HE'S IN THE TRAILER, MARK.
I THINK IT'S REALLY LAME HOW YOU'RE ALL DESERTING GLORIE.
SHE'S GONNA BE OK, MARK.
BUT SHE'S *NOT* OK!
...NOW SHE IS.
I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO SAY *GOODBYE!* AND YOU'RE ALL JUST *SITTING* HERE ON YOUR *ASSES!!!* DOESN'T ANYBODY *GIVE A CRAP?!?*
MARK, YOU KNOW WE DO.
THEN *DO SOMETHING!!!*
WHERE'S GONE? FIGURES. HIDING LIKE A COWARD. SO WHO'S NEXT, HUH?
I AM.
JULIE, PLEASE TAKE THE BOY AND SARA BEHIND THE TRAILER. I DON'T WANT THEM TO SEE THIS.
THE MEN THAT COME TONIGHT WILL DO WHAT THEY SHOULD'VE DONE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
BUT DON'T WORRY-- MY SPILLED BLOOD WILL FINALLY SET ME AND SARA FREE.
WAIT, WAIT! I'M SORRY! DON'T LET 'EM HURT ARTIE, MOM!
MARK, SOMEDAY YOU'LL UNDERSTAND.
I DON'T *WANT* TO UNDERSTAND

FRANKLIN, WHAT THE @%$# ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?
I SWEAR THIS IS THE LAST TIME I WORK WITH A $#@%ç*# ALIEN ABDUCTEE. I MEAN IT!
HAVEN'T WE DONE ALL THIS BEFORE?
MOM, DON'T LET 'EM KILL ARTIE!
LOOK, MARK, THIS IS HARD ON ALL OF US.
TRUST ME, KID, IF GONE SAYS YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE THIS...
... YOU DON'T.
HEADLIGHTS-- THEY'RE HERE.
DO SOMETHING!!!
MOM-- SARA'S CRYING. SHE *KNOWS.*
RELAX, MARK. ARTIE SAYS SHE'S REGRESSED TO A CHILD-LIKE STATE. SHE DOESN'T KNOW, SHE JUST FEELS.
BUT MOM... THAT'S EVEN WORSE.
OK, LARRY. NOW LET'S GET IT RIGHT THIS TIME!!!
YOU COWARDS, ALL OF YOU!
MARK GIVING HIS LIFE FOR HIS DAUGHTER'S THE BRAVEST THING ARTIE'S EVER DONE.

WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME.
HE'S A SMARTASS, TOO. THIS'LL BE FUN!
I SEE YOU BOYS NEVER GOT YOUR HEADS BACK.
LET ME TURN AND GET A LOOK AT YOU... SOW BUGS, RIGHT?
HE'S NOT EVEN GONNA TRY TO STOP US.
LIKE HE'S GOT A CHOICE?
DAVE, I CAN'T KEEP SARA QUIET! SHE'S FREAKING OUT!
I KNOW IT'S SPLITTING HAIRS...
... BUT I'D RATHER DISAPPEAR THAN HAVE A BULLET IN MY HEAD.
STOP IT! STOP HURTING SARA!!!
SSCREEEECH!!!!!
WHAT THE F%@K WAS THAT?
UH... SOUND LIKE SOMEONE GUTTED A CAT.
YEAH- WELL, IT'S CREEPIN' ME OUT! LET'S DO 'IM 'N GO.
IS ONE OF YOU NAMED HARRY? ONCE I ANGERED A BOY WHO LATER BECAME A SKINHEAD AND SWORE TO RETURN AND FINISH ME OFF. I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE'D BE THE ONE.
NO, ASSHOLE. NOBODY'S A "HARRY".

SHE'S LOSIN' IT.
CAN YOU BLAME HER? THEY'RE KILLING HER DAD, AND YOU'RE HELPING THEM DO IT.
HOW CAN YOU DO THIS???
MARK, FORGIVE US.
HOLD ON, SARA-- ALMOST HOME.
HEY PARNS, WERE YOU REALLY A SKINHEAD NAMED HARRY?
IT'S A LONG STORY GLEN. JUST A SEC.
BLAM!
THERE. LET'S GO.
POP
THEY'VE LEFT.
MARK, WAIT! DAVE, DON'T LET HIM SEE!
SORRY JULIE...
... IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT.

HEY KIDDO, YOU'RE RIGHT ON TIME.
DADDY? WHERE ARE WE?
JULIE'S OUTBACK.
WE MADE IT, HONEY! WE'RE HOME.
WE CAN STAY HERE AND PLAY WHERE IT'S SAFE.
YEAH-- BUT I'M STILL AN IS... WITH MY OLD HAIR IN SOMEONE ELSE'S OUTBACK.
IS THAT A PROBLEM?
I GUESS NOT. I'M SORTA GETTING USED TO IT. BUT I HAD AN AWFUL DREAM.
SOMEBODY WAS TRYING TO KILL YOU, AND I COULDN'T STOP THEM.
I'M SORRY, DADDY...
I TRIED...
I REALLY TRIED...
BUT I FAILED.
WILL I EVER HAVE TO GO BACK THERE, DADDY?
NOT 'TIL YOU'RE READY, SWEETIE.
GOOD. I WANT TO STAY HERE WITH YOU AND PLAY. DO YOU STILL LOVE ME AS AN IS?
YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW MUCH...
HEY-- REMEMBER HOW I USED TO DO THIS?
YEAH, THAT WAS COOL. I WISH MOM WAS HERE.
YEAH, ME TOO.
DADDY, DO YOU FORGIVE ME...
... FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO SAVE YOU?

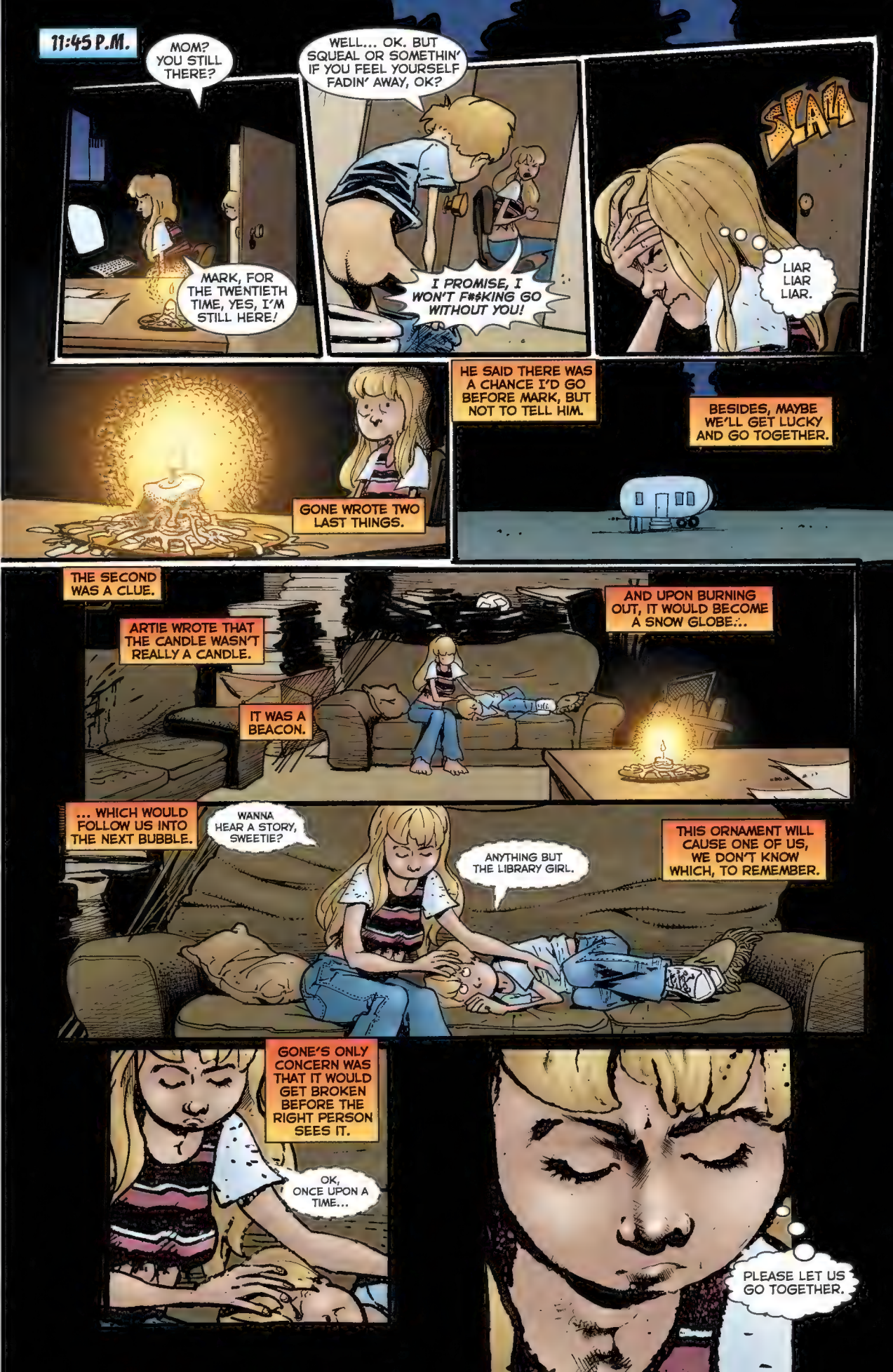
9:00 P.M.
... BUT YOU DID, HONEY.
YOU ALREADY DID.
WE CAN BE TOGETHER NOW, HONEY. NO ONE WILL SEPARATE US AGAIN. NOW HOLD ON.

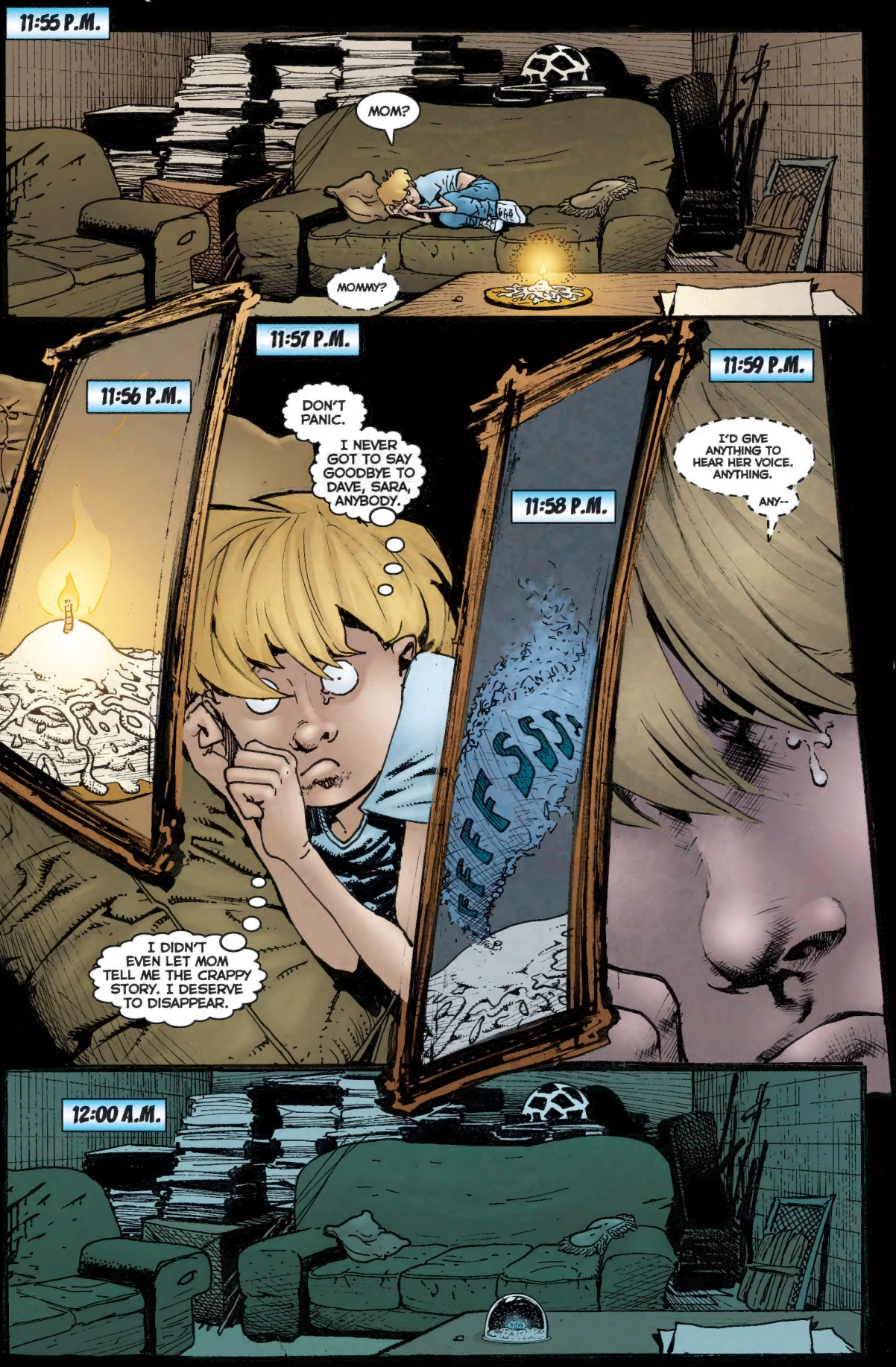
IT'S GONE! HIS YELLOW CAPE DOES NOT FOOL ME, MY QUEEN. ONE OF YOUR ISZ BITES AT HIS NECK, AS OUTBACK CREATURES DOG HIS EVERY MOVE.
IT'S OK, MAXX. HE'S WELCOME HERE, AND THEY'RE PLAYING, NOT FIGHTING...
IF YOU SAY SO, BUT I'LL STILL BE KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM.
FOR I AM...
YES, WE KNOW.
SO THE EVIL HAS A PLACE INSIDE PANGEA.
YES, BRER LAPIN, AFTER ALL...
HA HA HA HA HA HA
...WHERE ELSE ARE YA GONNA PUT IT?

10:00 P.M.
WE'RE THE LAST ONES LEFT, AND NOW I'VE DESTROYED MARK. HE HATES ME.
HE'S STRONGER THAN YOU THINK. HE ASKED ME TO CALL HIM IF YOU START DISAPPEARING. HE WANTS TO BE WITH YOU WHEN YOU GO.
HE DOESN'T HATE YOU.
THEN WHY'S HE POUTING IN THE TRAILER?
HE'S A BOY. HE NEVER HAD TO LOSE ANYBODY CLOSE, LET ALONE FIVE IN ONE NIGHT.
YEAH, THAT'S TOUGH.
CAN YOU FEEL GONE AND SARA IN YOUR MIND?
NAW, BUT I'M SURE THEY'RE THERE. WE'D'VE HEARD IF THEY DIDN'T MAKE IT.
BOY, HELL OF A NIGHT, HUH?
DAVE. I LOVE YOU. ALWAYS HAVE.
I FEEL CLOSER TO YOU AS A FRIEND THAN ANY OF MY SO-CALLED "LOVERS".
JUL, DON'T START. YOU'LL BREAK ME UP.
TOO LATE.
HEY, GONE SAYS I'LL GET MY FINGERS BACK IN THE NEXT BUBBLE. TOO BAD I WON'T REMEMBER THEY WERE EVEN MISSING. HA HA.
HA.
HEY-- REMEMBER THESE?

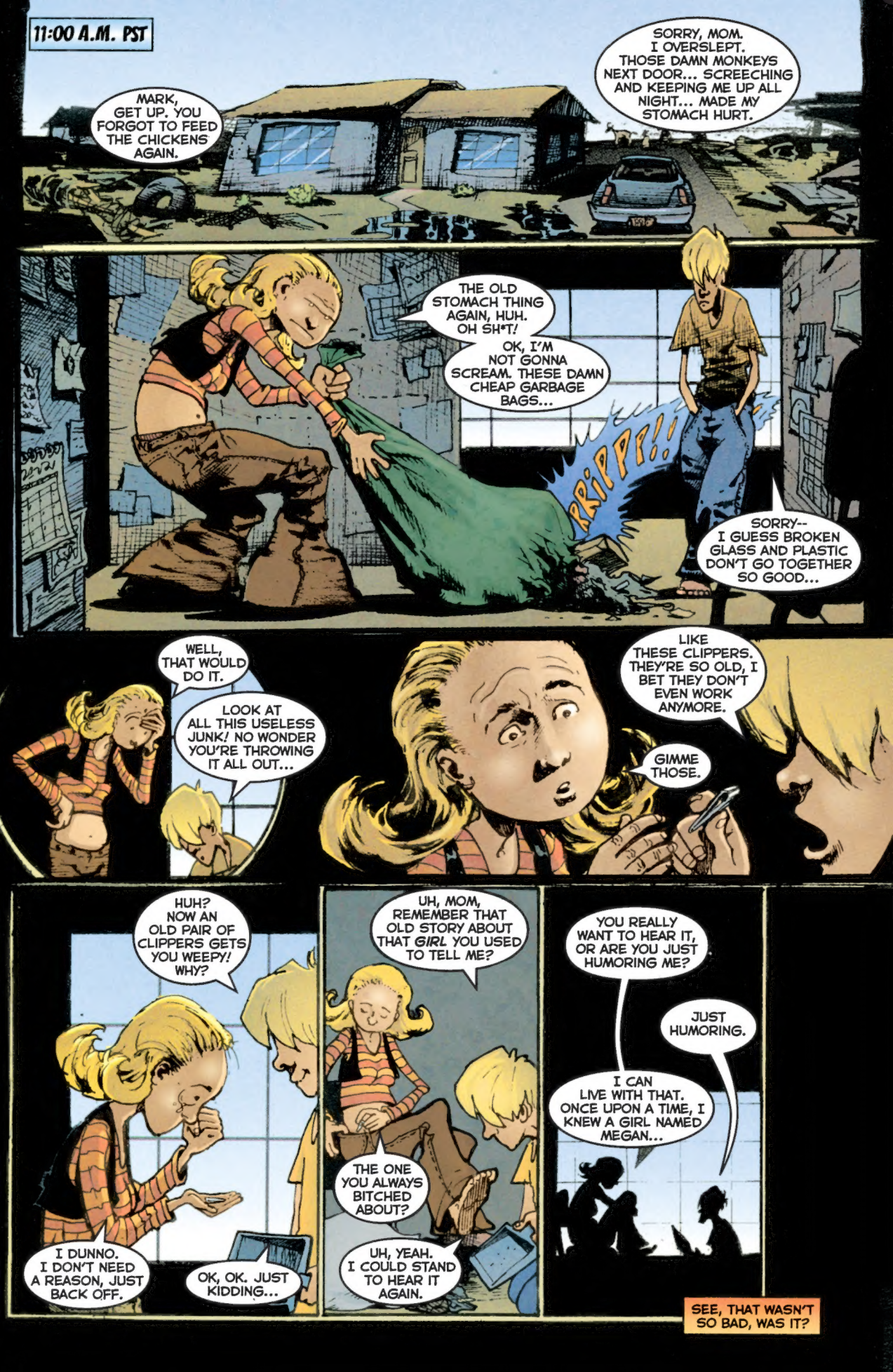
YOU DON'T WANT TO CLIP MY TOENAILS?
IS THAT SOMETHING WE USED TO DO?
I'M KINDA FUZZY ON ALL THAT MAXX STUFF, MOSTLY BEING DAVE NOW. SORRY.
OH... S'OKAY.
SO DO YOU THINK WE'LL EVEN *KNOW* EACH OTHER IN THE NEXT... WHATEVER?
SURE. MAYBE YOU'LL EVEN GET ME TO CLIP YOUR NAILS. 'COURSE YOU MIGHT BE MY GRANNY...
DON'T EVEN JOKE THAT WAY.
HEY, ME 'N MY GRANNY WERE CLOSE. GIMME THOSE.
OK, BUT I'M KEEPIN' 'EM. IT'S MY WAY OF REMEMBERING THE OLD MAXX.
WHAT IF YOU DON'T REMEMBER?
I WILL.

11:30 P.M.
DESPITE EVERYTHING, I RESPECT YOU THE MOST. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE STRONG ENOUGH TO GET US THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE. THAT'S WHY YOU MUST GO LAST.
I'M SORRY.
BY NOW IT MUST BE CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT, AND I'M GUESSING YOU AND MARK WILL BE ALONE, THE OTHERS HAVING...
... WELL... YOU KNOW.
HELLO-- ANYBODY HOME?
OH, YOU MUST BE GAYNOR. ARTIE WROTE YOU'D BE COMING BY.
HOW YOU HOLDIN' UP, KIDDO?
I'M A TOTAL BASKET CASE. BUT IT'S HARDEST ON MY SON.
I BET. THAT HIM ASLEEP OVER THERE?
YEAH.
LET ME HELP YOU CLEAN UP THIS "MESS".
THANKS. I'M STILL CONFUSED WHY YOU'RE PICKING UP HIS BODY, JUST SO HIS TRAILER WILL BE EMPTY WHEN THE WORLD ENDS?
NEATNESS COUNTS.
SO YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH US? I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO BE NEAR HIM IN THE END.
I AM! HE'S IN MY DAMN TRUNK, HONEY!
BESIDES, JUST BECAUSE WE'RE NOT IN THE SAME ROOM, DOESN'T MEAN WE WON'T...
... ALWAYS BE TOGETHER.
TRUST ME. WELL, I'M OFF.


11:45 P.M.
MOM? YOU STILL THERE?
MARK, FOR THE TWENTIETH TIME, YES, I'M STILL HERE!
WELL... OK. BUT SQUEAL OR SOMETHIN' IF YOU FEEL YOURSELF FADIN' AWAY, OK?
I PROMISE, I WON'T F#$KING GO WITHOUT YOU!
SLAM
LIAR LIAR LIAR.
GONE WROTE TWO LAST THINGS.
HE SAID THERE WAS A CHANCE I'D GO BEFORE MARK, BUT NOT TO TELL HIM.
BESIDES, MAYBE WE'LL GET LUCKY AND GO TOGETHER.
THE SECOND WAS A CLUE.
ARTIE WROTE THAT THE CANDLE WASN'T REALLY A CANDLE.
IT WAS A BEACON.
AND UPON BURNING OUT, IT WOULD BECOME A SNOW GLOBE...
... WHICH WOULD FOLLOW US INTO THE NEXT BUBBLE.
WANNA HEAR A STORY, SWEETIE?
ANYTHING BUT THE LIBRARY GIRL.
THIS ORNAMENT WILL CAUSE ONE OF US, WE DON'T KNOW WHICH, TO REMEMBER.
GONE'S ONLY CONCERN WAS THAT IT WOULD GET BROKEN BEFORE THE RIGHT PERSON SEES IT.
OK, ONCE UPON A TIME...
PLEASE LET US GO TOGETHER.


11:55 P.M.
MOM?
MOMMY?
11:56 P.M.
11:57 P.M.
DON'T PANIC.
I NEVER GOT TO SAY GOODBYE TO DAVE, SARA, ANYBODY.
I DIDN'T EVEN LET MOM TELL ME THE CRAPPY STORY. I DESERVE TO DISAPPEAR.
11:58 P.M.
11:59 P.M.
I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO HEAR HER VOICE. ANYTHING.
ANY--
12:00 A.M.

DR. PENDER? YOU IN HERE?
YEAH, DAVE. JUST THOUGHT I'D WORK A LITTLE LATE TONIGHT.
KINDA DARK TO BE GRADING PAPERS, ISN'T IT?
OH... RIGHT. GO AHEAD AND TURN ON THE LIGHT. I WAS JUST THINKING.
'BOUT WHAT?
ABOUT LIFE. I NEVER PLANNED TO TEACH AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE-- I JUST WOUND UP DOING IT. JUST MAKES YA THINK.
DON'T YOU EVER REGRET THE ROAD YOUR LIFE HAS TAKEN?
I DIDN'T PLAN ON BEING A JANITOR, EITHER, BUT I DON'T BEAT MYSELF UP ABOUT IT.
HEY DOC, WHAT'D YOU ALWAYS WANT TO BE WHEN YOU WERE A KID?
OH, I DUNNO. MAYBE SOMETHING EXOTIC-- A MAGICIAN. MAYBE AN INDIAN. I ALWAYS HATED COWBOYS.
ME TOO.
MAYBE YOU ALREADY *ARE* A MAGICIAN, BUT YOU JUST DON'T KNOW IT. HEH HEH.
LISTEN, DOC, WHEN I WAS A LITTLE BOY, AND THE GIRL NEXT DOOR MOVED AWAY, I THOUGHT MY WHOLE LIFE HAD ENDED.
AND NOW THAT YOU'RE OLDER, YOU SEE OTHERWISE.
I'VE TOLD YOU THIS ALREADY, HUH?
YEAH, BUT TELL ME AGAIN...
HEY, WHERE'D THAT SNOW GLOBE ON YOUR DESK COME FROM?
I DON'T KNOW. IT WASN'T THERE A MINUTE AGO...


11:00 A.M. PST
MARK, GET UP. YOU FORGOT TO FEED THE CHICKENS AGAIN.
SORRY, MOM. I OVERSLEPT. THOSE DAMN MONKEYS NEXT DOOR... SCREECHING AND KEEPING ME UP ALL NIGHT... MADE MY STOMACH HURT.
THE OLD STOMACH THING AGAIN, HUH. OH SH*T!
OK, I'M NOT GONNA SCREAM. THESE DAMN CHEAP GARBAGE BAGS...
RRIPPP!!
SORRY-- I GUESS BROKEN GLASS AND PLASTIC DON'T GO TOGETHER SO GOOD...
WELL, THAT WOULD DO IT.
LOOK AT ALL THIS USELESS JUNK! NO WONDER YOU'RE THROWING IT ALL OUT...
LIKE THESE CLIPPERS. THEY'RE SO OLD, I BET THEY DON'T EVEN WORK ANYMORE.
GIMME THOSE.
HUH? NOW AN OLD PAIR OF CLIPPERS GETS YOU WEEPY! WHY?
I DUNNO. I DON'T NEED A REASON, JUST BACK OFF.
OK, OK. JUST KIDDING...
UH, MOM, REMEMBER THAT OLD STORY ABOUT THAT *GIRL* YOU USED TO TELL ME?
THE ONE YOU ALWAYS BITCHED ABOUT?
UH, YEAH. I COULD STAND TO HEAR IT AGAIN.
YOU REALLY WANT TO HEAR IT, OR ARE YOU JUST HUMORING ME?
JUST HUMORING.
I CAN LIVE WITH THAT. ONCE UPON A TIME, I KNEW A GIRL NAMED MEGAN...
SEE, THAT WASN'T SO BAD, WAS IT?

ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

As I write this, our colorist, Rhonda, is emailing me the last few pages from *Maxx #35*, so it seems fitting to avoid putting off writing this *Maxx* Epilogue. Even the best story endings are often, by their very nature, bittersweet.

If it's true that every seven years the cells in our bodies replace themselves, thus making us different people, and, being as it's been over twenty years since I wrote and drew *The Maxx*~this means I'm three times removed from whoever I was when I first wrote this series.

So that makes me, and my creaky memory, the classic unreliable narrator three times removed. In other words, don't believe a thing I say. Instead, please just let the surreal artwork and whimsical words become sort of a time machine, a snapshot of wherever, or whoever, you were in high school, or whenever you first happened to pick it up. If the Outback was a portal for Maxx himself, then that's an apt metaphor for what readers seem to feel upon discovery, as if they've entered a mystifying, perplexing universe.

On the other hand, you may be picking it up for the first time, in which case it's nostalgia~free, and blessedly unencumbered. (If you wanna track them down, the original *Maxx* letter pages in the back of the original issues provide a pre~online peek at the fans' first reactions to it all).

I wish I could be as sentimental or nostalgic as many readers of *The Maxx* seem to be, but I am~thrice over~simply not the same guy who created it in the first place. I'm looking back on a stranger, too, in a way.

"Who is the guy who drew all that goofy stuff in the first place?" I often wonder.

But here's something new I can share:

Regardless whether *The Maxx* is your favorite work I've done or maybe *Marvel Comics Presents* covers, *Batman, Zero Girl,* or *My Inner Bimbo*, the point is, everything I've created is all part of one long tapestry, bits and pieces of one long story. Imperfect. Intuitive. Nonverbal. Visceral. All my artwork will succumb to the same fate, for better and worse, because the work and stories have a mind of their own, a greater wisdom... it's what my old friend Bill Loebs once called "dream logic." Yes, like a dream, it does fall apart in the harsh glare of daylight. But while you're spellbound and engulfed in the read (something we'll nickname the *Sam~a~Verse*), eventually it all somehow makes sense, in some unspoken magical way, unto itself.

Enjoy the ride!

~Sam Kieth